

predecessor, Louis XII., for the people's welfare, while he outdid all his predecessors in the assertion of his right to rule them as he pleased. "How much does your kingdom bring you a year?" asked Charles V. "As much as I will," was the proud reply. Nevertheless, France was, on the whole, very submissive under the sceptre of the most magnificent of its kings, next to Louis XIV. The Venetian ambassadors who recorded their observations in the reports which they sent at various times to the Doge and Council at Venice, were as much struck with the servility of the people as with the imperiousness of the king. France had learned in the stern school of mediaeval anarchy to bear much at the hands of its rulers, and its sixteenth-century kings were not slow to take advantage of its long-suffering.

"The French," remarks Cavalli in 1546, "honour their king with a sentiment so profound that they have given him not only their goods and their lives, but their honour and their souls." "There are other countries, such as Spain and Germany, greater and more powerful than France, but there is not one so easy to manage. In this lies its strength—in its unity and obedience. . . . Some people are born to obey, others to command, . . . and the French have entirely surrendered their liberty and their will to the king. It is sufficient for him to say, 'I wish such and such a sum, I ordain, I consent;' and the execution of his will is as prompt as if the whole nation had acted on its own initiative. The thing has already gone so far that some of the French who see further than others, say, 'Our kings were formerly called kings of the Franks (*Reges Francoruni*); at present one might call them kings of the Slaves (*Reges Servoruni*). . . . The present king (Francis I.) can boast that he has outdone all his predecessors." "The kingdom of France," notes Suriano, fifteen years later, "depends on the supreme will of the king, who is loved and served by his people, and possesses an absolute authority. He is prince by natural right, since this form of government has lasted for more than a thousand years (*sic*). He does not succeed by election, and thus is not forced to wean the affection of the people, and, as his title does not rest on force, he is not tempted to be cruel and tyrannic." The later Valois were not men of force of character or will, yet, at